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UNCLAS BANGKOK 005454

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EB, EB/TRA/AN, EAP, EAP/BCLTV, AND L/EB
TRANSPORTATION FOR EDWARD OPPLER AND KEITH GLATZ
COMMERCE FOR ITA:JBENDER AND JKELLEY
SINGAPORE FOR FAA: HOWARD NESBITT
STATE PLEASE PASS TO USTR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [FAIR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND CIV AIR: PROPOSAL FOR OPEN SKIES TALKS
7-8 SEPTEMBER 2005

REF: A. A) BANGKOK 5393

[B. B\) SECSTATE 147598](#)

[C. C\) SECSTATE 155552](#)

[1. \(U\)](#) This cable is an action request. Please see paragraph [16](#).

[12. \(U\)](#) As reported in Ref A, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra recently proposed sending an Open Skies delegation to Washington before his scheduled visit to the United States with an eye to be able to announce substantial progress toward (or, ideally, conclusion of) an Open Skies Agreement when he meets with President Bush in September.

[13. \(U\)](#) In support of this objective, and pursuant to guidance set forth in Ref B, Embassy has conveyed the substance of USG concerns with respect to the lack of progress to date toward an Open Skies Agreement to the office of Minister of Transport Pongsak Raktapongpaisal, as well as to working level contacts. It is the Embassy's understanding that the Minister of Transport shares the Prime Minister's commitment to expediting conclusion of an Open Skies Agreement. The Minister is aware that an agreement would not include cabotage rights. He is considering sending a delegation to Washington on September 7-8 (with September 9 held in reserve) to negotiate an agreement based on the model text. Embassy expects to receive formal notification and details of such plans from the Ministry at a meeting with the Embassy Chief of Mission, currently scheduled for September 2. Embassy has passed a copy of the model text of an Open Skies Agreement to our contacts within the Ministry. It is our understanding that Thai civil aviation officials are familiar with the particulars of the model text.

[14. \(U\)](#) Pursuant to Ref C, Embassy has scheduled consultations on aviation safety oversight between the Department of Civil Aviation and Federal Aviation Administration officials visiting Thailand on August 31. The FAA delegation consists of Larry G. Kephart, David M. Smith, Michael E. Daniel, and Robert Andrews Edwards.

[15. \(U\)](#) Post believes that this moment in advance of the Prime Minister's visit to the United States represents our best hope to conclude an Open Skies Agreement. High-level attention to the issue and senior Thai officials' desire for an agreement in the context of the Prime Minister's upcoming visit to the United States stands out in stark contrast to longstanding resistance at the working level from Thai Airways and its allies in the bureaucracy. The present government's desire to revitalize tourism in the wake of last year's devastating tsunami and plans to make Thailand an aviation hub offer compelling motive for an agreement at the highest levels. The window of opportunity is likely to be open for only a short time. Accordingly, we support accepting the Prime Minister's proposal to send a delegation to negotiate an agreement in early September.

[16. \(U\)](#) ACTION REQUESTED: Please advise as to Washington agencies' views on receiving a Thai Open Skies delegation September 7-9 for two days of negotiations, with one day to be held in reserve. Embassy wishes to be able to confirm the availability of the above dates in its exchanges with the office of the Minister of Transport before the meeting scheduled for September 2.

BOYCE